The Maid of Mystery.

"The Central Park's Hermit" Is Only an Innocent Irish Girl.

She Tells Why She Felt Safer with the Squirrels Than with the City's Crowd.

Not Afraid of Darkness and Solitude, but in Deadly Fear of Men Who "Spoke" to Her.

THE AMAZING STORY OF MARY LYONS.

Homeless and Friendless, She Would Not Beg and She Would Not Sin—In the Tombs Now.

"The Hermit of Central Park" is in the Tombs, not because she has committed a crime, but because she preferred suffering cold, homelessness, starvation to sin. Mary Lyons is the young girl's name, and it is she who has been celebrated of late for her life in Central Park, with birds and squirrels to share her loneliness.

When the stress of cold weather came too severely upon her, having not even a hollow tree to shelter her, as had her dumb friends, she gave herself up for arrest, and the story of how she was taken, numb and starving, to Blackwell's Island, has lately been told the readers of the Journal. From this not too suitable refuge for friendless innocence, she has been transferred to labor in the Tombs, and here, surrounded by crime, she must remain until the expiration of her term of three months, unless kind hands rescue her.

Passing the iron gates and the long corridors of the men's prison into the female department of the Tombs, I was left in the matron's room while an attendant called Mary Lyons. A little figure entered, soft and rounded in outline. She had a pleasant Irish face, sunny brown eyes, smiling under dark brows and lashes, dark hair loosely twisted on the crown of the head, met one's gaze, and a gentle Irish voice responded "Yes, m'am," when asked if this were Mary Lyons. She was a trifle shy at first, but responded affectionately to human kindness and sympathy, of which she has received but little since first she came to the New World.

"Why did I come, miss?" she repeated. "Sure, I was all alone, and I thought I'd be havin' more chance here. But it's knocked about I've been, with never a friend but one in all America."

And then she told what up to now she has never told a living soul, her little life history, a simple story; but few are more pathetic.

Born in Cork, the first child of her young parents, she was left orphaned when she had completed her first year. Room was made for the baby in already overcrowded family in Cork, and she grew up with the other children, having a good home and many advantages. She was sent to a convent school, a large one, taught by more than thirty nuns, where she obtained a good education.

School days passed at last, and the old man, who had taken her father's place—Cork is far off, but it is wiser not to call him by name—wished Mary to support herself, and strongly urged her coming to America. They thought she'd have "more chance," as she expressed it, and perhaps failed to realize the danger besetting a girl friendless and poor in a stranger land.

"I believe some of the Irish girls almost expect to pick up gold in the streets of America," said the visitor to her. Mary looked up, with the sideway cock of her head so like her friends, the birds.

"Oh, no, ma'am; I didn't expect that either," she said, simply. "It's just to find work, I came, and, faith, I'd never have come but for their urging me."

So two years ago this little creature sailed over the unknown ocean to seek her fortune. And she has not found it—at least, she has not found good fortune.

She had one friend here, and to her she went at first. "'Twas the only person I knew," she said.

"But, surely, Mary, this woman would have sheltered you again when you were homeless," I cried.

"Oh, ma'am; how could I be askin' her?" said Mary, half reproachfully. "She is poor herself, and has plenty of children. Why should she maintain a girl like me? Oh, I'd never bother her, never." And she pressed her small mouth together with a firmness that showed the strength that has made her bear so much rather than go wrong.

She stayed with this woman for a while; twice she obtained employment, and thus struggled through the first year of her exile. It was last July that the worst began; from that time to this she has had no work, and how she has existed is hard even for her to understand. It was then that she began seeking for consolation among the birds and squirrels of the Park, whose friendship for her and hers for them has made her famous.

Three times she has been committed for vagrancy. A vagrant she was, because in a big city of homes there was no one to take her in, and she did not know to whom to apply for the work she sought.

Cold weather began to set in and Mary was homeless. There are many sorts of courage, and the highest kind of all is in the breast of this little Irish girl with the deprecating manner and gentle ways. She knew how to be hungry, and she knew how to brave the cold and storm, sleeping in the rocks and under bushes in the Park, but she did not know how to sell her soul for comfort, and she could starve, but she would not sin. Truly, in her playful schooldays in old Ireland she had learned something worth learning, and the good Sisters in Cork had taught her the value of woman's purity.

It came to a crisis at last, the cruel torture she was suffering. Ducal weddings, metropolitan opera, Christmas joy, came to gay, rich, kindly but careless New York, and in the midst of splendor poor little Mary was starving.

For two days she had not tasted food—not even so much as the crumbs she used to give the squirrels—and the cold was piercing. It was then, when she could bear no more, that she called feebly to the policeman and asked to be arrested. Warmth, and light, and wine, and money could be had but around the corner; Blackwell's Island is not attractive, but virtue was more to her than luxury.

She was arrested, taken before the Magistrate, committed for three months, sent to the Island, transferred to the Tombs to labor, and there she stood telling this simple yet wonderful story, as she wiped her pretty little hands in her apron.

"And what do you want most, Mary—clothes, books—what?" she was asked.

"Nothing at all, miss," she answered. "I've clothes enough." Which, by the way, the matron said was hardly true, for she is thinly clad, but this little heroine does not beg. "But I'd like a situation," she said, earnestly. "I want to find work when I'm through here."

"What can you do?"

"Most anything. I can sew, but I don't like it. I can cook real good, and I'd like to general housework."

"I think, Mary, that it can be found for you. So it's really true, after all, that you are fond of human beings, too—that you don't love animals better?"

Mary's face dimpled into laughter. "Sure, that's not likely," she said. "I love them, though, and I love the squirrels. Do you know, miss, up there in the Park," she burst out, her eyes brightening as she spoke, "I saw an old gentleman, and he was feeding the squirrels, and he had them that tame that they sat on his knee an' ate out of his hand. Now would you think of that! I'd not have believed it, only I saw it."

"Could you make them so tame yourself?"

"No, m'am, I never could," she said, "but they weren't shy like, either. But some of them do be cranky," she added, honestly.

"Would you like a bird in a cage here?" she was asked. She shook her head.

"I'd not like a bird—in a cage," she said.

Poor little caged thing herself! She had no wings to follow her feathered friends southward.

"Ah, miss," she said, suddenly, "did you ever go to see the menagerie? Sure, it's fine. And the baby lions they've got there; oh, they're grand! I always like to go to the menagerie. But the tigers and lions and wild animals, I don't like them very much. But the foreign birds—I think they're beautiful."

There is no mistaking the love of the dumb creatures in the girl. She knows them by heart, literally.

This is the solution of the mystery of which New York has been hearing so much. Not at all a crazy girl, hiding away in the wildest portions of the Park, but a bright, sensible little Irish maiden, sleeping out of doors because she had nowhere else to sleep; making friends with dumb things because she was like a loving child, and had nothing else to love; sharing her scanty food with her squirrels and birds because she was generous and loved them; freezing, starving, facing death because she would die rather than give up virtue. That is the whole story; could there be a finer one, or a greater heroine than friendless little Mary Lyons?

"What made you go to the Park?"

"Well," said Mary simply, "you know I felt safe, like."

"Safe! At night, alone, sleeping under rocks?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mary. "The rocks hid me, and the streets are that noisy I do be afriad in them."

"Then, after that, when breakfast was over?" I suggested.

"After aht?" said Mary. "Sure it's hard to tell you, miss. I'd walk around and look at the babies a bit. And it's elegant to see the little boats on the water. But most always I had to be hiding, for I was afraid I'd get arrested."

"You never liked to go to the Island, then?" I said.

"Oh, ma'am, it's no place for a decent girl. The women there—oh, the language they do use! You wouldn't believe; 'tis terrible," said Mary.

"Yes; tell me about the rest of the day. Did you have dinner?"

Mary looked at me with pretended reproach. "Sure, miss, you wouldn't have me so extravagant as getting three meals a day. I never had any dinner. In the afternoon, when it gets hot, I'd find a shady place to lie down in, and then I'd just rest, and talk a bit to the birds and the squirrels. I used to think maybe they knew I was lonely, and they'd whisk around the livelier to cheer me up a bit. 'Twas just nonsense, ma'am, but it made me feel happier. And whiles, when I'd get all quiet and fee dozy, then I'd hear a policeman coming, and I'd have to move on. Well, the days went on like that, and sometimes I'd get scared at being caught and go out of Central Park altogether. But when it began to get dark I'd come back again, for the streets are awful at night, and sometimes some one would speak to me. But in the Park 'twas shady and still, and I felt safe there."

"But, Mary, weren't you cold and afraid?"

"Why, yes, ma'am, of course 'twas pretty cold after the frosts came," replied Mary, as if surprised at the simplicity of the question. "But, then, I never laid awake to think about it, and it's surprising how living out doors like that makes you sleepy. But I wasn't afraid—not much. You see, all the little creatures, they live so safe like, and at night the birds just tuck their heads under their wings, and never bother to fret about cats or something eating them, and I got to feeling as if, with nothing but the big sky over me, I was just as safe as they were, and I'd kind of try to tuck up warm and go to sleep, too. And nothing ever did happen to me," she added, gratefully.

"Six months, ma'am, barring the time I was down to the Island," answered this strange little woman.

"And did nothing bad ever happen to you?"

"Well, m'am, once some boys stoned me, and another time a man chased me, but I was always pretty good at running and jumping, and I got away."

"And you never made friends with any of the women you met?"

Mary shook her head. "The kind that would speak to me I wouldn't speak to, and those whom I would speak to wouldn't notice me. No, ma'am, I just lived by myself—and the squirrels," she added, smiling.

"I Got to Feeling as if, with Nothing but the Big Sky Over Me, I Was as Safe as the Birds Sleeping in the Trees. But I Was Afraid on the Streets."

(Sketched by a Journal staff artist.)

Bloomers Had to Go.

Swell Flat House Dwellers Would Not Endure Their Costume.

They Only Wore Knickerbockers in the Privacy of Their Own Apartment.

THEY HAD TO GO BACK TO STUDIO LIFE

Their Attempt at a Quiet Home Was Foiled by Their Love for an "Emancipated" Costume.

The new woman cannot exhibit her emancipation too freely in New York. Three girls tried it in an uptown apartment house. They wore bloomers in their own flat and——they suffered for it.

These three girls left student life and tried to settle staidly down in a fashionable apartment house! Fancy. One of them sang. One of them is an artist for a daily newspaper. The third one has written a successful play and almost everyone knows her name nowadays. Most girls who get on as well as this with a serious purpose in New York get soon into the way of thinking that they earn the right to dress in a way most conducive to their bodily comfort and a healthy and active thinking capacity. They are often obliged to carry their own latchkeys and keep whatever hours seem necessary.

The trouble began when these three girls fancied, because they could afford it, that they had a right to a little home of their own with, cheerful coal fires in grates and a maid and two pairs of white curtains to each window. They rented a pretty flat in that big apartment house and fixed it up delightfully. It had furniture that matched and a grate in every room. And about their little household duties, as well as in the serious big one they had undertaken they continued to wear the very becoming little knickerbockers they had learned to value in their studio life.

They are sorry now. Women can be mighty mean when they try.

The girls had a receiving day, as a matter of course, when they dressed like any other girls would dress at home when they expected visitors. And they dressed very well, too. But first one an d then another of the men in the house learned that on ordinary occasions the girls wore knickerbockers. They found it out from the women, of coures, for only the women ever saw them in their free and easy bloomers at first. This speedily interested the male residents. The ingenuity displayed by those men in trumping up excuses for visiting those girls—on business bent, of course!—and the bribes they used with the maid were worthy of a better cause.

The time speedily came when the three girls in their flat contemplated posting a similar announcement in the elevator. But that would never do. Moreover they had no thought of discarding their sensible garb merely because a few men chose to make donkies of themselves. For two seasons those same men had very likely been wheeling beside their sisters and sweethearts who were similarly garbed. If they had not themselves done this they had only to go to the park or boulevard to find other men's sisters and sweethearts in all varieties of bloomers and gaze there to their soul's satisfaction.

Presently, however, the other women in the afit began to make audible remarks about very personal matters. And calls ceased, as did pleasant salutes in the corridors.

"My husband has very strong convictions about bloomers," said one woman. "He believes they effect the morals."

"So they do," replied the girl who sang, "but nto in the manner you suppose—try them and see!"

Some of the younger and more envious of the other women intimated that "It was altogether impossible to understand the anxiety of three such homely girls to display their shapes. But, bless you! that rolled off the girls as harmlessly as water rolls from a duck's back. They had mirrors, every mother's daughter of them, and, however much of a boon bloomers might have proved, those three girls had never worn them if they had proved unbecoming. Their minds were in no uncertain state about that point.

But one day the gentlemanly agent struck the knocker of this pretty little flat, occupied by our bloomer girls. He had been a secret admirer of their costume along with the other men in the house, and that day he devoutly hoped the girls were not in to receive him. But the maid came back with the word that they were, and presently they filed in before him, each assuming a severe and business like expression, calculated to bring awe to the most graceless soul—and this agent was not that. In reality he held them in real admiration as brave and earnest young women, and instinctively every one of the three knew it.

Their manner gave no indication of this. With great difficulty the poor little man began:

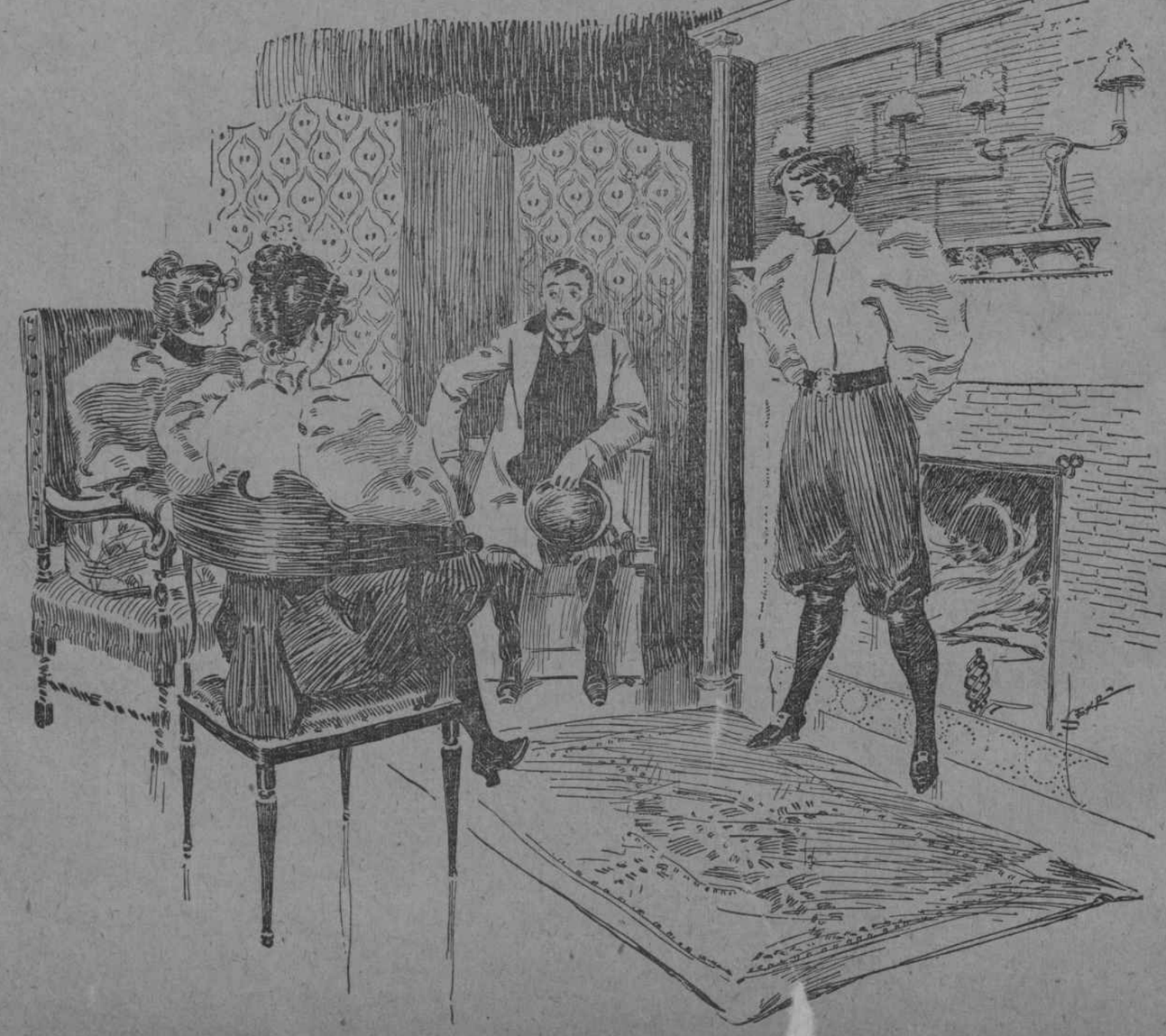
"Ah-h ahem! You know (at last by happy inspiration), you know, there is a new tenant on this floor."

"You don't say," was the reply in unison. And that agent wished he was many miles away.

After several unsuccessful essays, however, he managed to indicate that Mrs. Potts-and-Kittles had come to him about the bloomers.

"You may say to the whole of them," said the girl who sang—and she rose to her feet with a very pretty dignity, and a color in her face that told of strong inward control if it did cost an effort—"please say to the whole vulgar lot of them that we could not keep our own self-respect and remain in the house with them. And good-day, sir; we shall leave at once."

And that is why three girls went back to life in the studios.



"She Had Declared to the Agent That She Would Not Stay in the Same House with the Bloomer Girls."

Girls Who Sling Copy.

A Woman Reporter Gets Some "Pointers" at Wellesley College.

She Attends the Class in Journalism and Learns Many Things.

How Fair Young Students Are Trained to Get Out a Paper on Academic Principles.

COLLEGE SCANDALS ARE DUG UP,

And Weighty Editorials Are Written on Events of International Moment, All of Which the Girls Enjoy Very Much Indeed.

Last week I enjoyed a most novel and improving experience. It was a lesson in newspaper work with the girls in Wellesley College. I travelled way up there among the Massachusetts hills, with the thermometer marking 9 below zero, to find out if I could not get a few points in journalism which would improve on the tuition which I had received in Park row.

And I ascertained beyond all doubt that there was any amount of education to be had there, and that if all the newspaper men and women in New York could be conveyed up there for one or two lessons they would come home, as I did, so fully convinced of what they didn't know and hadn't even suspected that they would stop writing with lead pencils and making little crosses for periods forever and ever.

Wellesley is the only girls' college in the world where journalism is included in the regular curriculum amid the appalling list of "ologies" and "isms" which constitute the course of study.

Several years ago Professor Johnson, of the University of Pennsylvania, formed a similar class for men, but no woman's college was daring enough to follow his example until Ella Goodenow Wilcox, the instructor in rhetoric at Wellesley, introduced the idea at the beginning of the last college year. So successful did the innovation prove that the college trustees included journalism in the study course.

Miss Wilcox recognized the fact that journalism was among the new professions open to women, and one of the few in which they received equal pecuniary recompense with men. She also recognized the broadening and refining influence of the work upon the feminine mind, and the habits of system, accuracy and conciseness which the study must necessarily inculcate.

The journalistic class now includes over thirty of the brightest girls in the college—for only those students who have done superior work in the first "semester," or first half of the college year, are considered fitted for the newspaper class.

The girls of Wellesley do not frivol like those of Vassar and Cornell, you know. They are all big-eyed, big-waisted young women with a healthy disdain for French heels and pearl powder. They comb their hair back from their brows, and I think they would be apt to psychologically analyze a young man, if he attempted a flirtation, in the same fashion that Howells's heroines do.

The newspaper class assembled soon after luncheon in a big room in which there were palms and pictures of sculptured gods and goddesses.

The managing editor was a plump and bright-eyed girl with a Southern accent. She passed on matters which came up for discussion and dictated the policy of editorials. Her word was law, and when one of the star writers brought in an article demanding a war with England regarding the Venezuelean boundary lines she threw it out as ruthlessly as though she sat at a roll-top desk in Park row the regulation nineteen hours a day.

There were two city editors: one a blond girl with violet eyes, and the other a stern-orbed young woman in a plaid silk waist. They had regular schedules of assignments and stories, with the number of words required and the pen names of the writers opposite—for each girl's writings are identified by an assumed name in order to avoid partisan criticism or personal prejudice on the part of the editors who blue-pencil the work.

About half of the girls were reporters and special and editorial writers. I noticed that they seemed happier than the editors whose duty it was to collect and assign the matter.

The girls handed their "copy" to these various heads of departments, Miss Wilcox acting as editor-in-chief. Little was said, and everything was done in the most orderly and business-like manner.

First came a weather report, read by the local editor, a pretty girl with Brown-Pottery hair.

"This article," she said, "is by Miss Prophette Dunn, our weather sharp. It is headed 'Zero Weather at Wellesley,'" and she read:

When morning broke over the college yesterday it brought with it cold winds which swept fiercely over the college grounds and lashed the waters of the lake to a fury.

The mercury in the thermometer on the piazza marked a temperature of 9 below zero, and the students who ventured out to examine it came within doors with most undignified haste.

It was the coldest day in the college records, and few ventured out of doors until the storm abated, late in the afternoon.

She continued reading and then handed the copy to another editor for correction. In the meantime the girls had been taking notes, and then one by one they rose and voiced their criticisms.

The rhetoric, the manner of expression, the choice of words, the formation of sentences, were all discussed.

An editorial on the "Venezuelean Boundary Question" was then read. It proved a most thorough and exhaustive political essay. It evidently had taken days to prepare and was applauded at its close, while not one word of criticism was offered. It certainly deserved none.

Then came the report of a lecture in the chapel—an excellently written story—and then a brigh sketch about a college girl who received love leettrs and lost the ribbon-tied package in the class room. This last seemed to be founded on fact, and created great amusement among the girls.

This was followed by the giving out of assignments for the next week.

These were some of the assignments:

Concert in the chapel next Wednesday evening—Report, Miss Dale—Three hundred words. Musical criticsm, Miss Baker—Three hundred words.

Reported midnight supper to be held in one of the college cottages next Friday evening, Miss Kensington—Full report, with names, menus and costumes—Five hundred words—Scare head.

Weather story, with incidents about college, etc.—Miss Dunn—Five hundred words.

News story—It is reported that a young woman occupying rooms on the first floor of the college building wears a complexion mask. It is claimed that this fact was discovered one evening last week when the young woman in question had retired early. One of our bright reporters, in an endeavor to discover the truth, cried "Rats!" outside the other girl's door. She immediately opened it and looked into the hall, and the mask was distinctly visible—Miss Brown—One thousand words.

EDITORIAL—"Should Football Be Included in Girls' College Athletics?"—Miss Moore—Three hundred words.

"Is Gum Chewing on the Increase in Our Midst?"—Miss Caryl—Two hundred words.

When the paper had "gone to press" I enjoyed a chat with Miss Wilcox.

She is enthusiastic on the subject of this work which she has undertaken at Wellesley, and it is very possible that within a year or two the college will boast of a full-fledged newspaper, edited, printed and published by these clever college girls.

KATE MASTERSON.